

# Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

## December 2022



***Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of the gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?***

*Advices and Queries #27*

# Upcoming Events and Announcements

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, January 15 from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. We will be deciding on a new book to read at that time. Please contact Shirla ([shirla766@gmail.com](mailto:shirla766@gmail.com)) to be added to the participant list.

The Peace and Social Action Committee will be meeting on Monday, December 12 at 7 p.m. on Zoom. To be added to the list and receive the Zoom link, please contact Dick Preston ([prestonr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:prestonr@mcmaster.ca)).

There will be a carol sing after Meeting for Worship on Sunday, December 18 at 11:30 a.m. Those interested in participating from home can also join on Zoom on our regular link.

There will be a Welcoming Meeting for Darlene James, who has been newly admitted to membership by Hamilton Monthly Meeting, on Wednesday, December 21 at 3:30 p.m. It is rumoured that there will be cake! Darlene invites Friends to check out her favourite winter solstice piece, “Solstice Carole”, sung by Kim Baryluk, who is part of the Wyrd Sisters. Lyrics are available at [cypresschoral.com](http://cypresschoral.com), and a lovely performance of the piece can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2xec25WNPg>

The next Meeting for Worship for Business will be held on our regular Zoom link on Sunday, January 8 at 1:30 p.m.

Canadian Yearly Meeting is hiring a Communications Coordinator. The deadline for applications is December 16. A full position description, with requirements, is available on the website: <https://quaker.ca/news/hiring-a-communications-coordinator/>.

A Friend-ly reminder from your Treasurer: In order to be issued a tax receipt for the 2022 calendar year, your donation must be received by the Meeting by December 31. Mailed contributions where the postmark is December 31 or earlier will also be issued for the 2022 tax year. Pete Cross will be picking up donations from the box at the Meeting House on January 1.

## **From Beverly Shepard**

Dear Friends, I know we're all tired of the pandemic! We want to visit friends in their homes, go Christmas shopping, eat out fearlessly, and -- especially for many of us -- hug others after meeting for worship on a Sunday. Connections seem fragile these days, and community frail. I'd like to remind (or perhaps inform) you of a couple of things that feel helpful to me, and may to you, in keeping our Quaker bonds secure.

One is the e-newsletter produced by the CYM Publications and Communications Committee. It comes out every month and is Friendly, fun, and informative. It's usually forwarded to you from the Hamilton Monthly Meeting address, but you can get it directly if you subscribe, which costs nothing. Go to [quaker.ca](http://quaker.ca), click on the "hamburger button" to get "News and Events" and then choose "Newsletter". Or you can find the link in any edition of the newsletter itself.

Another wonderful way to feel closer to your Friends is to join the CFSC-sponsored online worship on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 Eastern Time. Friends from New Brunswick to Vancouver Island are there, and if you don't know them all, after a couple of weeks you'll feel as though you do. It is deep and real worship, and it shows our extent as Quakers and at the same time the closeness we can maintain across a vast continent.



# **Canadian Interfaith Reference Group Report: Triennium Plan Program Review**

*by Paul Dekar*

This is one of my periodic reports as CYM Representative to the Canadian Interfaith Reference Group that I co-chair with the Reverend Roshni Jayawardena, Anglican priest of Trinity-St. Paul, Port Credit. CIRG is a committee of the Canadian Council of Churches. We seek to make meaningful CCC's mandate to respond to Christ's call for unity and peace through prayer, dialogue and Gospel witness. Yesterday, we reviewed our work over the last three years. Our three priorities:

1. Encouraging meaningful Christian-Muslim relationships in Canada. To this end, we are developing an on-line resource to enable member churches and individuals to deepen mutual understanding and positive relationships with Muslim neighbours and to counter anti-Muslim sentiment. This should be available by the end of the summer.
2. Encouraging and supporting CCC's work on Christian-Jewish relationships in Canada. To this end, we developed a ritual of lament for the brokenness of the Canadian Christian Jewish Consultation that several speakers presented during CCC General Board meetings November 16, 2022. We have produced documents such as "A Guide for Participation in Public Events Involving More than One Religious or Spiritual Tradition" and "Holy Day Greetings to our Jewish Neighbours" available on our website, [www.councilofchurches.ca/interfaith/cirg](http://www.councilofchurches.ca/interfaith/cirg).
3. Interfaith learning and sharing. This has been largely an internal goal, realized in the way we have functioned during the pandemic. Our priorities for the 2021-2024 triennium follow:
  - A. Indigenous spiritualties in an interfaith context, with emphasis on the variety of indigenous spiritualties. We seek to actualize commitments made in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the CCC Expression of

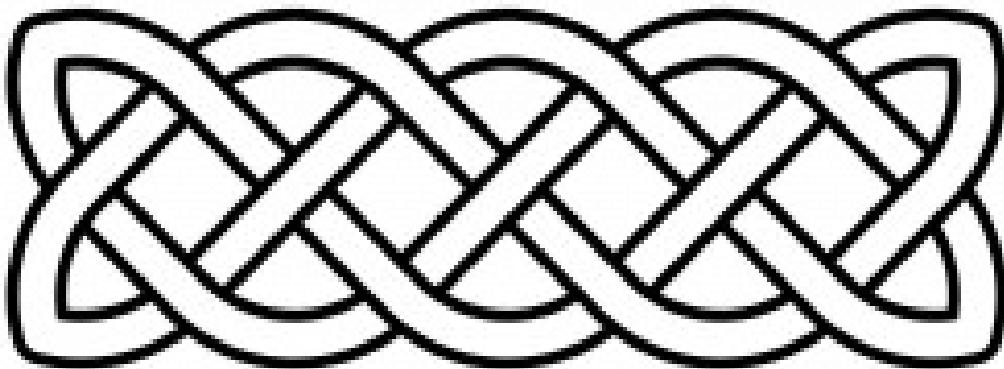
Reconciliation. We have met with indigenous leaders seeking to bring these documents to life and, in conversation with indigenous partners, to follow up, mindful of the need to “walk the talk.”

B. Articulating and showcasing interfaith or religious responses to the contemporary challenge of racism. Like our first, this is a high societal agenda priority. We are seeking to hone the questions and reflections around racism specific to interfaith work and how congregations or members are responsive.

C. Finalize the Christian-Muslim online resource and continue to resource the General Board and CCC member churches’ relationships with Jewish communities

Struck by how much we have accomplished despite or perhaps as a positive consequence of not meeting in person, I highlight the facilitating skills of Maria Simakova of the CCC staff. Peter Noteboom, CCC’s General Secretary, has attended several meetings and confirmed CIRG’s importance.

I have found this work challenging, robust and important. My CIRG work has overlapped with my CFSC role and offers theological reflection through the perspective of Christian interfaith leaders. Our meetings and resources are excellent resources. We have had a measure of success in lifting up the call for Christian (and inter-religious) unity. Understanding that we are on a journey in relation to our priorities, we seek to build and maintain mutual respect through listening, honouring and initiating steps that move us from aspirational to action.



# Mary's Song

by Sheldon Clark

## Conception and Birth

My son, conceived in holy love, was born to serve.  
He was Zacharias' and Elisabeth's nephew, John's cousin.  
He, too, was a miracle child as announced by the Archangel Gabriel.

Nazareth, our home, was subject to Roman occupation, taxation, and power.

Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, was into an uncertain and violent world.  
I worried, would he even live, and grow up, even after our flight into Egypt?

## Babyhood

Our son gradually found his place, as a child will.  
He nursed, laughed, gurgled, burped, slept, and laughed.  
He crawled and walked like a seafarer.  
He imitated what he heard and saw and discovered in his own voice.  
He formed complete sentences and asked questions.  
He scratched his knees, fell down and stood up into caring hands.  
He found his inner voice and spoke words of Truth.

## Early Life

Our son grew up, was adventuresome, self-confident, and known to be wise.  
He helped build affectionate, respectful, and caring relationships.  
He found joy in simple natural things and among varieties of people.  
He contemplated our world and worlds beyond our experience.  
Where did he go?

## Young Adult

Our son found hospitality in neighboring villages.  
He followed streams into the hills from whence he emerged serene.  
He seemed able to live a fulsome life unscathed by worldly pleasures.  
He visited the Jordan Valley and the shores of the Sea of Galilee.  
He was so like others, yet, he was so different.

## **Adulthood**

Joseph and I were constantly amazed.  
Our son saw the Light for us to see, too.  
There was no adolescent rebellion, simply a profound maturation.  
Our son helped us beyond expectation and found companionship  
everywhere.  
Our son gave love as he had been given love and more.  
Our son prayed so that others would never fear from want again.  
Our son was grounded in the undefinable Spirit of God's Presence.

## **Death**

I saw his death, too. Horrible.  
Ironically, I felt a Light in the darkness of his ending.  
I saw the beginning of his Eternal Life as in a dream  
I felt his power of love reach immeasurably beyond time and space.  
I knew in my heart that His death was only the beginning.  
God's Presence is as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world  
without end.



# **Book Review: Robin Wall Kimmerer's**

## ***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants***

*by Robert Nunn*

Our reading group, made up of Hamilton Friends and welcoming others, has had the enriching and enlightening experience of monthly discussions of Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, three or so chapters at a time, since last January.

Dr. Wall Kimmerer is both a scientist, educated in the discipline of science, and an Indigenous woman, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, who is deeply studied in the traditional teachings of her nation. The book chronicles her life work to braid together the two radically opposed ways of producing knowledge. Teachings flowing from the cultivation and use of sweetgrass form the recurrent themes of the book.

The book begins emphatically on the side of traditional knowledge with the Indigenous myth of Skywoman's fall from the skyworld and the creation of our world. (I use "myth" to signify "stories that matter.") The story begins the thread that runs through the book surrounding the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world -- the gift of Turtle Island, and our reciprocal responsibility to receive it with respect and gratitude.

Dr. Wall Kimmerer discovers an important truth about science at her interview for acceptance into a forestry school. When the advisor asks her why she wants to study botany, she replies that she wants to learn why asters and goldenrods look so beautiful together. The advisor, not writing down her answer, explains: "Miss Wall, I must tell you that *that* is not science. ...And if you want to study beauty, you should go to art school."

This was her introduction to the discourse of science, which rests on a structure of rules and regulations that set clear boundaries between what is

knowledge and what is not. The French philosopher Michel Foucault's explication of the concept of discourse, in brief, notes:

Discourses are produced by effects of power within a social order, and this power prescribes particular rules and categories which define the criteria for legitimating knowledge and truth within the discursive order. These rules and categories are considered *a priori*; that is, coming before the discourse. It is in this way that discourse masks its construction and capacity to produce knowledge and meaning. It is also in this way that discourse claims an irrefutable *a-historicity*.\*

Miss Wall had just made a statement that was not "within the true." And at that time, she "did not have the words for resistance." *At that time.*

She chronicles her progress towards thinking and producing as a scientist. But while in graduate school she already had been led seemingly by chance to regain her footing on the path of Indigenous knowledge when she attended a small gathering of Native elders where she listened to them talking about traditional knowledge of plants.

She has learned to practice science, appreciating its value in producing knowledge, while recognizing that it objectifies the natural world and separates the observer from the observed. But she has also learned to put a counter-discourse of traditional Indigenous knowledge into practice, recognizing that the "observer" is in a reciprocal relationship with the "observed", accepting the gifts the world offers and responding with gratitude and accepting the obligation of stewardship.

And she does find her words of resistance. In the chapter titled "Asters and Goldenrods", she offers a model, one of many in the book, of following scientific discourse until it meets traditional knowledge and morphs into awe. The answer to the question why asters and goldenrods look so beautiful together is that their purple and yellow colours are complementary, each enhancing the intensity of the other and thus enhancing their attractiveness to the pollinator bees. The bees too see beauty. The asters help the goldenrods to attract bees, and the goldenrods help the asters. The bees not only collect nectar, they pollinate. She

writes: “It’s a testable hypothesis, it’s a question of science, a question of art, and a question of beauty.”

Why are they beautiful together? It is a phenomenon simultaneously material and spiritual, for which we need all wavelengths, for which we need depth perception. When I stare too long at the world with scientific eyes, I see an afterimage of traditional knowledge. Might science and traditional knowledge be purple and yellow to one another, might they be goldenrod and asters? We see the world more fully when we use both.

The question of goldenrod and asters was of course just emblematic of what I really wanted to know. It was an architecture of relationships, of connections that I yearned to understand. I wanted to see the shimmering threads that hold it all together. I wanted to know why we love the world, why the most ordinary scrap of meadow can rock us back on our heels in awe. (46)

In the final section of the book, Dr. Wall Kimmerer tells in graphic detail what happens to the earth when we humans regard it as an object from which we are detached, both by the discourse of science, and by the myth in the Bible that purports to give humans “dominion” over the earth. Her prime example is Lake Onondaga, a sacred lake, where the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and its Great Law of Peace were born, and the Great Tree of Peace was planted. Industrialization turned the lake into a dumping ground for industrial waste plus the waste from the city of Syracuse. But this is not the whole story. Since 2005, the Onondaga Nation had been pressing what it termed a “land rights” suit, to restore its power to act on its duty of stewardship. The suit was dismissed in 2010. Meanwhile, reclamation of the lake has begun, and a new science, Restoration Ecology, has been born.

To bookend this final section, the author calls on the Indigenous myth of the Windigo, the cannibal spirit whose hunger can never be appeased no matter how much it consumes. She writes:

The native habitat of the Windigo is the north woods, but the range has expanded in the last few centuries. As [the Ojibway scholar Basil]

Johnston suggests, multinational corporations have spawned a new breed of Windigo that insatiably devours the earth's resources "not for need but for greed." The footprints are all around us, once you know what to look for. (306)

Gratitude for all the earth has given us lends us courage to turn and face the Windigo that stalks us, to refuse to participate in an economy that destroys the beloved earth to line the pockets of the greedy, to demand an economy that is aligned with life, not stacked against it. It's easy to write that, harder to do. (377)

\*The passage is from an article by Rachel Adams outlining Foucault's concept of discourse. See <[criticallegalthinking.com/2017/11/17/michel-foucault-discourse/](http://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/11/17/michel-foucault-discourse/)>



*Photo by Beverly Shepard*

# December

*by Beverly Shepard*

Now  
I am secure.  
In December  
The closing down is finished  
Summer garments stored away  
Bare roses snug under dry leaves  
Garden tools hung on the garage wall  
Firewood cut and stacked.  
The month darkens and darkens  
To the longest night  
That still and shuttered night  
Just before the birth of light.

Now  
I can retreat:  
Fireplace, book, music, wine, cats, and my beloved.  
I can be in winter  
Stored  
Snug  
Shuttered  
Still.  
At home.

# About this Newsletter / Submission Guidelines

This Newsletter is a monthly publication of news and announcements relevant to Hamilton Quakers.

It is also a venue for members and attenders to share creative works or articles they have written on subjects that may be of interest to our Quaker community. As a general guideline we are looking for submissions that are inspirational and related to Quaker concerns, as well as announcements and news. Members and Attenders are encouraged to submit works for the newsletter.

Requests for newsletter items are announced after Meeting for Worship and/or via email during the week before Meeting for Worship for Business. They are due by the Friday before Business Meeting. Submission of materials implies permission to publish. Copyright for original material resides with the author.

If the person submitting the article is unknown to the editor or if there are questions as to whether the article will be appropriate for the Quaker newsletter, the editor will consult with the clerk(s) who will together discern what will be included. Written permission to publish must be obtained from the copyright holder if a submission is not the original work of the submitter, unless the works are in the public domain, or are covered under the creative commons license.

Hamilton Meeting reserves the right to edit submissions for length or content in consultation with the authors. When opinion pieces are included a line will be added indicating "Submissions reflect the opinions of their authors, and not necessarily of Hamilton Monthly Meeting".

Submissions should be directed to the current editor, Sîan Reid, [daywitch@gmail.com](mailto:daywitch@gmail.com).

*We acknowledge the land upon which Hamilton Friends Meeting House is located as the shared traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt covenant. This historic peace agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy, the Ojibwe, and allied nations represents a commitment to share and protect the land, water, plants, and animals, with respect. It is the privilege of Hamilton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) to share in the tradition of stewardship of this land, which has been the environment of human beings in this territory for thousands of years. We honour the original Peoples of this land and express a commitment to and gratitude for the opportunity to work together toward restorative justice and reconciliation.*